

HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY

Eastern University was founded in 1932 as a department of the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, which began in Philadelphia, PA, in 1925. This college division was organized for the purpose of supplementing the professional preparation of ministers. In 1938, the Department of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania approved the granting of the A.B. and the Th.B. degrees upon the completion of a six-year course of study. In 1948, a third year was added, making a seven-year course leading to the A.B. and B.D. degrees.

After almost twenty years of growth and progress, the Board of Trustees voted on April 17, 1951, to secure a charter and organize Eastern Baptist College as a separate institution. The Charles S. Walton estate was purchased for the college at St. Davids, PA. The purpose of the college was to prepare students not only for the ministry, but for all walks of life. The curriculum was enlarged, the faculty was strengthened, and a co-educational liberal arts college was opened. Classes began in September, 1952, and the college received accreditation in 1954.

Early in 1972, the legal name of the school was changed to Eastern College: A Baptist Institution. The purpose of this change was to increase its appeal to all evangelical Christians, though the school retains its relationship to the American Baptist Churches in the USA. Eastern continued to grow in size and complexity, and was granted university status in December, 2001. Eastern University reunited with Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2003. Honoring the legacy of its longest-serving President, Gordon Palmer, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary was renamed Palmer Theological Seminary on July 1, 2005.

Today, Eastern University is comprised of Palmer Theological Seminary and College, the College of Arts and Humanities, the College of Business and Leadership, the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, the College of Health and Sciences, Templeton Honors College, and Esperanza College. Eastern University enrolls over 7,500 students in these undergraduate, graduate, professional, international, and seminary programs.

Historically, the trustees, administration, faculty, and staff have sought to shape Eastern University to reflect the following characteristics. These aspects are captured in the University's mission, goals, and vision statements, and they have characterized Eastern throughout its rich history.

Academic and co-curricular programs at Eastern University are planned and carried out in the hope that all members of the University community will:

- Appreciate that all truth is from God and that Jesus Christ should be acknowledged as the Lord of the intellect;
- Display a knowledge of biblical teachings and their application to life situations;
- Seriously consider the claims of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord;
- Develop a Christian worldview;
- Be committed to excellence in their academic work and to life-long learning;
- Be determined to apply their knowledge in service to others;
- Be equipped with the communication and problem-solving skills which will enable them to participate creatively in society;
- Be aware of their own worth and potential;

- Increasingly develop self-awareness and sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others;
- Be aware of their historical and aesthetic heritage;
- Have a grasp of the wonder of the created universe;
- Develop an appreciation of diversity among individuals and among cultures;
- Be prepared to live in an interdependent world, aware of global problems and dedicated to bringing God's justice and peace to all individuals and societies;
- Exercise Christian stewardship of their time, possessions, and bodies.

To these ends, the residential college has sought to:

Attract persons who are:

- Committed to the achievement of these outcomes;
- Capable of participating fully in the life of the University as a community of Christian learners.

Develop a curriculum which includes:

- An emphasis on basic skills in writing, speaking, logic, mathematics, and a foreign language;
- A liberal arts core which provides exposure to the major disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences;
- An emphasis on biblical and theological understanding;
- In-depth study in one field;
- Pre-professional and professional opportunities for those students desiring them;
- Intentional integration of a Christian worldview with the academic disciplines.

Design an environment which fosters:

- Students' management of intellectual and psychological maturation processes in themselves and others;
- Open-minded inquiry and expression of differences of opinion, stimulating all members of the University community to explore new areas of knowledge and patterns of thought;
- A sense of personal integrity and recognition of the rights and responsibilities of each individual;
- The assumption by students of increasing responsibility for their own lives;
- The development of policies and procedures that enable all persons associated with the University to know that they are respected and that their opinions are heard.

Develop resources which will ensure:

- Maintenance of the physical facilities necessary for the academic and co-curricular programs in a manner that demonstrates a sense of stewardship;
- The fiscal health of the institution through a broadening base of support and effective management of human and financial resources.

Further, the University has been committed to:

- Effective communication of the purposes and goals of the institution both internally and externally;
- Constructive relations with graduates designed to benefit both the University and the alumni;

- Vigorous pursuit of these goals by all members of the University community;
- Continuous study of goal achievement.

History and Relationships of Palmer Theological Seminary Foundations

Eastern University's Palmer Theological Seminary is part of an educational tradition that reaches back over three centuries to Bristol, England, where in 1679 Baptist training for ministry formally began. From that beginning to the present, Baptists have been concerned about issues of faith and order, such as a vital relationship with Jesus Christ, a believer's church, voluntary religious associations, and religious liberty. The visible church, institutional life and expressions of faith have all helped to shape this great tradition, which forms a context for the theological nurture of ministry and leadership.

The Seminary was founded as Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary on March 19, 1925 during a period of social, intellectual, and spiritual unrest. Its twelve founders were committed to conserving the great historic evangelical beliefs within a strong denominational commitment to what was then the Northern Baptist Convention. At the same time the original professors agreed to a rigorous and progressive curriculum that would ensure academic and theological integrity.

Through an intensive strategic planning process, the Seminary has strongly reaffirmed its theological heritage and its central commitment to the preparation of sound, effective pastoral leadership as well as to a diversity of other Christian ministries.

From the beginning, the Seminary provided remedial education opportunities for those lacking the credentials for a graduate-level program. This eventually led to the establishment in 1952 of Eastern Baptist College, which became Eastern College in 1972 and Eastern University in 2001.

In 2003, the Seminary reunited with the school it planted and began operating under the Eastern University umbrella. In 2005, the Seminary was renamed Palmer Theological Seminary after its third (and longest serving) president, Gordon Palmer.

Palmer Seminary continues to pursue the course set by its founders and summarized in its original motto, "The Whole Gospel for the Whole World."

Associated Ministries

Palmer Theological Seminary is affiliated with the American Baptist Churches, USA. While the Seminary's primary relationship is with the churches and agencies of this denomination, it prepares persons for ministries in the whole Church. Within an evangelical context, the Seminary is broadly ecumenical in spirit and practice.

In 1991, the Seminary joined with the West Virginia Baptist Convention to form a unique partnership for the purpose of offering a Master of Divinity degree program to current and aspiring pastors in and near West Virginia. This partnership has enabled men and women in the region to develop or enhance their ministry skills while remaining close to home.

Philadelphia: Urban and Suburban Context

Palmer Theological Seminary, residing on Eastern University's St. Davids campus, is located near one of the nation's major industrial and cultural centers. With nearly 1.5 million people, Philadelphia is the largest city in

Pennsylvania, the second largest on the East Coast, and the fifth largest in the country. The greater metropolitan area is home to nearly 4 million people.

Founded in 1682, Philadelphia is one of the nation's oldest cities, though its populace is younger (with a median age of under 35 years) than the national average. It is located within a few hours of other major U.S. cities, including Washington, D.C. and New York City. Also close by are many varied recreational opportunities, including the Pocono Mountains to the north, historic Lancaster County to the west, and beach resorts on the New Jersey and Delaware coasts to the east and south.

A cultural hub, Philadelphia is considered to be among the nation's top three cities in theater and classical music and number one in architecture. Eighty-eight colleges and universities, including the University of Pennsylvania, are located in the area, as are numerous historic sites such as Valley Forge National Park and Independence Hall. Among the fine arts and science centers located in the city are the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Franklin Institute, Fels Planetarium, the African American Historical and Cultural Museum, and the Academy of Music.

The Seminary's proximity to the city allows students easy access to hands-on ministry opportunities in an urban context. Philadelphia's rich ethnic diversity gives it the feel of an international federation of neighborhoods. Historically, the city has a heavily German, Irish, Polish, and Slavic base. However, African American, Jewish, Italian, Latino, and Asian communities are also strong and distinct, and lately an increasing number of Russian immigrants have been settling in Philadelphia.

The area is rich with religious diversity as well, with a spiritual history dating to the 17th century. Most church denominations are represented in the Delaware Valley. Area churches range from large urban and suburban congregations to small, city store-front churches.

Baptists constitute the largest Protestant group, with most of them belonging to the National Baptist or Progressive National Baptist Conventions. The Philadelphia Baptist Association, the oldest Baptist association of churches in the U.S., was formed in 1707. Affiliated with American Baptist Churches, USA, this association consists of some 124 churches with an aggregate membership of over 60,000.

The Seminary Community Student Formation

Comprehensive formation for ministry takes place both in and out of the Seminary classroom. Palmer Theological Seminary is committed to equipping whole persons to incorporate the whole Gospel into all the various contexts and relationships in which they are involved. We are concerned not only with the intellectual and academic development of our students, but with their personal, social, and spiritual development as well.

Worship

In addition to the weekly Chapel service with the Eastern University community, Palmer Seminary holds its own worship services two times a week, one of which is designed using United Methodist liturgical resources. The seminary Chapel services are a delightful and refreshing opportunity for us to celebrate the God of our salvation, savor our oneness in Christ, and seek the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit as we journey together. Preaching that heals and motivates, manifesting a variety of Christian worship traditions and styles, times of silent prayer and reflection, and eating meals together, are the centerpieces of these

Chapel services. We sing our Christian faith through a variety of musical expressions—traditional, gospel, contemporary, international. Storytelling, liturgical dance, and other creative forms give further expression to our reverence for the work and presence of God and the life we have in Christ.

Fellowship

In addition to worship and prayer, the entire Palmer Seminary community enjoys gathering for mutual edification and for fun on other occasions. These can include gatherings over meals for prayer and conversation, all-campus potluck luncheons in the fall and in the spring, a carol sing at Christmas time, and other activities as community members express interest.

Student Assembly

Representatives of the student body are elected each year to serve the community, and to allow for students to have an active voice in Seminary policy formation and governance. Student Assembly representatives formally interface with faculty and administration during faculty and Student Assembly meetings, as well as on an ongoing informal basis. The Student Assembly creates and hosts a variety of student activities including Palmer Spirit Week, Christmas collections for charities, community meals, and Chapel programs.

Special Interest Groups

The Seminary offers the opportunity for students to form a wide range of small Special Interest Groups. These groups convene for a variety of reasons: prayer, mutual support, outreach, Bible study, spiritual direction, issues advocacy, denominational identity and information, etc.

Alumni/ae

The Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University alumni/ae include all those that have graduated from the certification and degree programs. It is a viable body of God's servants who for decades have kept the welfare of the Seminary as a priority in their lives. Gifts that are given to the seminary help support lectureships, scholarships, and the annual fund, which works towards the general advancement of the school and its mission.

Launched in 2020, the Alumni Care Initiative is an innovative communal approach to discovery and discernment as Palmer offers support and nourishment to its graduates through fostering spiritual, relational, and theological growth beyond graduation.

Inclusive Language

The Seminary is committed to the belief that in Christ, and in the new order inaugurated in his life, death and resurrection, there can be no room for inferior and superior categories of human beings, either on the basis of gender, race, ethnic or national origin. Within this conviction, Scripture teaches that males and females alike respond to the calling of God into the ministries of Christ, and that God's Spirit gifts both males and females for such ministry.

Our expression of this commitment is seen in the Seminary's "Policy on Inclusive Language," printed in the Student Handbook.